



The Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine (UK)

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ATCM's Response to Department of Health Press Release – Next Steps for Complementary Therapy

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Statutory regulation is the best way to safeguard the public

The Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine (UK), ATCM, would like to comment on today's announcement by Mr Andy Burnham, the Secretary of State for Health, on regulation of herbal and traditional Chinese medicine practitioners and acupuncturists.

Since House of Lords Select Committee report on Complementary and Alternative Medicine in 2000 suggesting a statutory regulation for herbal medicine and acupuncture, the government has worked to introduce such regulation for 10 years. The Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine (ATCM) has been actively contributed since 2002 to the work conducted by the Department of Health to prepare for statutory regulation of our profession.

The reports of three Department of Health Working Groups, as well as the responses to the two public consultations have shown overwhelming support for statutory regulation as this is essential to safeguard the public. The Department of Health made a proposal for our professions to be regulated by the Health Professions Council (HPC) in 2005 and all the work has been directed towards this.

We believe that statutory regulation is the best way to safeguard the public. A legal case at the Old Bailey in February 2010, in which a patient suffered from kidney failure and urinary cancer after taking a banned toxic herbal product for 5 years from a bogus practitioner, is due to lack of statutory regulation for our profession. It highlights the necessity and the urgency for the government to introduce statutory regulation. The title of TCM practitioner, as well as herbal medicine practitioner and acupuncturist, must be statutorily protected in order to stop any bogus people from using these titles, which is a real danger to the public.

However, the government seems to have failed to deliver its promise, and has changed its mind from HPC as our regulatory body to CNHC. We would like to demand an explanation from the government on what ground it has changed its mind, as CNHC is only a voluntary

body with no statutory power. From the rather short DH press release which lacks details, we doubt whether the government still wants to introduce statutory regulation, or decides to go for an alternative.

In particular, we are deeply worried about the apparent separation of regulating herbal medicine and acupuncture, which is indicated in Mr Andy Burnham statement as two different steps. All our members are qualified traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) practitioners who practise Chinese herbal medicine and acupuncture side by side as two major components of TCM. The government has promised to regulate TCM as a whole since the first round of public consultation in 2004. We do not want to see TCM to be mutilated again.

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